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Recommendations on teaching English as a second language include: creating a classroom atmosphere that encourages non-English speaking children to be willing and anxious to learn; placing the children in classrooms with children of their own age and size; helping the parents to understand the school's aims and the importance of regular attendance; treating the child's culture respectfully; encouraging the children to speak English, but also allowing them to speak their native tongue; emphasizing experiences in understanding and speaking rather than in reading and writing; planning a sequence of language development extending through elementary and secondary schools; providing inservice education opportunities for teachers of such children; establishing summer schools for preschool children; and conducting experiments and developing materials to improve English teaching for non-natives.

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Division of Instruction
Bureau of Elementary Education
Helen Heffernan, Chief

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PUPILS

Report of Education Study Group
Third Annual Conference on Families
Who Follow the Crops

Visalia, March 1, 2, 1962

Prepared by

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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Teaching English as a Second Language to Elementary School Pupils[1]

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[1]Report to the Education Study Group, Third Annual Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops, Visalia, March 1, 2, 1962

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Teaching English As a Second Language[1]

The discussion was launched by the review of a statement made by Helen Heffernan, Chief of the Bureau of Elementary Education, California State Department of Education, in her presentation on "Migrant Children in California Schools."[2] A quotation follows:

"An increasing number of migrant children come from homes where English is not the native language. These children have special educational problems. Recent interest in teaching foreign language in the elementary schools has made a body of research available which may eventually help in the solution of this problem. It has been common practice to "give them a year to learn English." After this year, children who speak Spanish at home are expected to do about the same school work as English-speaking children and are often classified as "retarded" if they are not successful.. Language experts tell us that learning a foreign language in school requires an unbroken sequence of eight or ten years of study. Since English is used all day, Spanish-speaking children in our schools would probably not need so long a sequence to learn English, but schools should study the possibility of providing opportunities for planned, sequential study of English using audio-lingual methods and modern materials and equipment for Spanish-speaking children throughout the primary and middle grades."

Following presentations by members of the resource group and general discussion these recommendations were made:

1. Special efforts should be made to help children who do not speak English as their mother tongue to feel that they are part of the school and all of its activities. An atmosphere should be created in the classroom and

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[1]Based on recorder's notes of discussion group at Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops, Visalia, March 1, 2, 1962

[2]Presentation at general session of the Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops, March 1 to be printed in California Journal of Elementary Education for May 1962.

the school which helps these children to be willing and anxious to learn.

2. These girls and boys should be placed in classrooms with children of approximately their own age and size. Representatives of one school reported that regardless of academic grade placement no child was ever retarded more than two years.[1]

3. Parents should be helped to understand the purposes of the school and the importance of regular attendance. The child's own culture should be treated with respect at all times. Children should not be forbidden to speak their native language, but should be encouraged to speak English, and given systematic instruction so they can do so easily and effectively.

4. Learning a language follows a specific sequence: understanding, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading and writing should be delayed for children who have an inadequate background in English, and experiences in understanding and in speaking should be greatly expanded.

Experiences in understanding include the building of concepts. Many children fail in reading because they have not had the experiences which give meaning to the written word. Short study trips planned to develop meaning for a selected group of words or ideas have been effective. For instance, children may visit a new house which is being built, and learn such words as roof, carpenter, lumber, nails, concrete. These experiences are more effective when the children can go in groups of not more than five accompanied by a person who has been instructed in the concepts and vocabulary to be developed. Frequently the help of members of the community or of older children can be enlisted for this service.

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[1] "The Administrator Looks at Grouping." California Journal of Elementary Education. Volume XXVII, No. 2, November, 1958. pp. 116-122.

Film strips, recordings, flat pictures and a wide variety of objects which can be handled and named, are also effective means of building concepts and vocabulary. The children must have many chances to talk freely so they can formulate and practice what they are learning. School terms such as drinking fountain, black top, lavatory, eraser, chalk, crayon can be readily taught by utilizing theimmediate environment.

The building of concepts, is a gradual process and sufficient time must be given for the children to develop a store of understandings before reading is introduced.

5. Schools serving children for whom English is not the mother tongue should plan a sequence of language development which extends through the elementary and secondary schools. Many children appear to understand much better than they actually do and the effect of living in two languages extends into adult life. Foreign language experts recommend a twenty minute period of instruction daily for eight or ten years in order to achieve reasonable facility in the target language. When English is the target language many schools have left instruction to chance and great wastage of human potential has resulted.

6. In-service education opportunities should be provided to help teachers attain the attitudes and skills necessary to teach English as a foreign language. A school philosophy should be developed which recognizes the seriousness of the problem. All personnel should understand the importance of understanding and speaking English before competence in reading and writing is expected.

7. Schools serving children who speak little or no English should explore the possibility of establishing summer schools for pre-school children. (State funds to support such schools are not now available, although funds are available for Child Care Centers.)

8. Materials should be developed and experiments tried in many districts throughout California to improve the teaching of English to children for whom it is not the native tongue.

One simple experiment would be to introduce 20 minutes of language development each day in classes enrolling Spanish-speaking children.

This instruction could be given to a small group within the room, or if a special teacher is available, the children might leave the room for the special help. In either case, groups should be kept small so that the children have many opportunities for individual practice. (The Army Language School in Monterey schedules adults in classes of not more than seven.)

Materials in Teaching Children Who Move With The Crops[1] and Teachers' Guide to the Education of Spanish-speaking Children[2] are available to all, and give a wealth of excellent suggestions.

Special Recommendations

Special recommendations from the group were to urge the passage of HR 8880 which provides federal funds for the education of migrant children and to recommend that the National Defense Education Act be amended to include teaching English as a foreign language.

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[1] Teaching Children Who Move With the Crops. Report and Recommendations of the Fresno County Project. The Educational Program for Migrant Children. Fresno: Published by Walter G. Martin, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools. 1955. pp. 47-68

[2] Teachers Guide to the Education of Spanish-speaking Children. Staff in Elementary Education. Sacramento: California State Department of Education. Volume XXI, No. 14, 1952. pp. 37-62